

incentive for the elected officials to listen to their constituents if they will not otherwise listen to them. If it is difficult to implement, so be it. If it does overly burden elected officials, I think so be that also. I'm not overly concerned about either of those alternatives. I am concerned that we do provide mechanisms and send messages to the people of the state and to the elected officials that they are often called upon to be responsive, and that if they are not responsive that there should be consequences for failure to being responsive. Certainly others have mentioned the potential for recall and other actions, those are not affected. Officials...elected officials, county officials could still be recalled if they failed to act in accordance with the directives of a petition. I certainly disagree with the postulate that Senator Chambers is putting before you, remember these petitions only have to be signed by 10 percent of the registered voters. The notion is that these agreements, if they're developed at all, would eventually be approved by 50 percent or more of the voters in each one of the counties that might be subject to a consolidation agreement. Certainly wouldn't be appropriate to have 10 percent of the voters in any given jurisdiction dictating to the other 90 percent, and even at that you're only talking about the registered voters, you're not talking about all the eligible voters, or even all of the residents of a given political subdivision. So I wouldn't agree with that extreme to which Senator Chambers is asking you to consider. I understand, Senator, that you're raising that as an illustration of an extreme that you could carry the policy to. I simply would disagree with that extreme. I'm comfortable with the language that has been developed and I really can't imagine, quite frankly, the circumstances under which elected officials would ignore the wishes of people expressed in the form of a petition to at least consider and try to develop consolidation agreements. But if they do, I think they know...they would need to know that that is a breach of what I would consider to be the public trust that is answerable as the Legislature can provide by statute. And I'm comfortable with the mechanisms that are provided in the committee amendment as it stands.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body. I rise to again support the amendment. This will be